REMARKS

Claims 1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 14 and 15-16 have been amended. No claims have been added or canceled. Accordingly, claims 1-16 remain pending in this application.

Information Disclosure Statement

On February 27, 2002, Applicants filed an Information Disclosure Statement. However, the Examiner has not returned an initialed copy of the Form PTO-1449. Accordingly, Applicants request the Examiner initial and return the attached copy of the Form PTO-1449 to indicate that the documents have been considered.

35 U.S.C. §§102 and 103

Claims 1, 5-8, 10-12 and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Woerner et al (U.S. Patent No. 5,882,174). Claim 2 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Woerner et al. Claims 3 and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Woerner et al in view of Lemieux et al (U.S. Patent No. 5,392,914) and of Astle (U.S. Patent No. 5,827,745). Claim 4 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Woerner et al in view of Yonemitsu et al (U.S. Patent No. 6,143,083). Finally, claims 13 and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over

Woerner et al in view of Yahiro (U.S. Patent No. 6,182,719). These rejections are traversed as follows.

Woerner et al. discloses a system for loading parts onto trays or unloading parts from trays. An essential technical feature of Woerner et al.'s system comprises a stack of trays loaded on a first movable cart, which is wheeled into a first cart docking bay, and a second empty cart, which must be positioned in a second cart bay beside the first bay for receiving processed trays. The first cart and stack of trays, or just the stack of trays, are lifted to align the uppermost tray with a tray singulator and clamping mechanism to singulate a tray for further processing.

In contrast, the present application teaches a system for supplying and/or removing singulated part racks. One major difference from the Woerner et al. system resides in that, in the present invention, the supply lifter for lifting the part racks containing unused parts to the rack separation station and the recovery lifter for moving the used part rack downward for recovery are both mounted on a movable table (see, e.g., specification of the present application at page 15, lines 1-2, and FIGS. 3-5). This enables the supply lifter and the recovery lifter to be pulled out from the rack lift chamber together with the movable table, and when the movable table is pushed to a predetermined position, the both lifts are settled at their original positions where they can be raised and lowered (see specification page 15, lines 16-28).

Due to this construction, the system is essentially simpler than Woerner's system with regard to the control mode as well as to the handling itself. In the

present invention, there is no need for additional control means to detect the proper positioning as it is the case for both independently movable carts in the Woerner system. Woerner describes the positioning of a cart by a cart locator mechanism which is triggered by an operator, or which could be automatically activated by a sensor indicating that a cart has been wheeled into its approximate position (see, e.g., description of Woerner et al., at column 3, line 3, *et seq.*).

Thus, the part feeding device of the system of the present invention, having both the lift for unused part racks and the lift for the used part racks installed on one moveable pull-out table further accounts for a discrete and compact automated analyzer system configuration. The system is flexible in that it can be independently arranged in a modular system for further sample processing. Further, the compact configuration of the present invention is essentially space-saving in comparison with the Woerner system, which aims at loading and unloading heavy metal trays, while also providing convenience to a user of the analyzer for loading unused part racks and unloading used part racks.

Accordingly, it would not be obvious for a person of skill in the art to combine the teachings of Woerner et al. and each of the teachings of the other art of record (see paragraphs 8-10 of the Office Action) in a way resulting in the subject matter of the present application, as set forth in amended claims 1, 8, 10, and 15. The remaining claims depend from these claims, claim additional features of the invention, and are allowable at least because they depend from allowable base claims.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully requests that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

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FORM PTO-1449 (REV. 7-80)	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE	ATTY. DOCKET NO. ASA-1069	SERIAL NO.
LIST OF DOCUMENTS CITED BY APPLICANT *(Use several sheets if necessary)*		APPLICANT H. SUGIYAMA et al	
		FILING DATE February 27, 2002	GROUP

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* EXAMINER INITIAL		DOCUMENT	DATE	NAME	CLASS	SUBCLASS	FILING DATE *(If Appropriate)*
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FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

		DOCUMENT	DATE	COUNTRY	CLASS	SUBCLASS	TRANSLATION YES	TRANSLATION NO
	AL	8-146010	6/7/96	Japan			☐	☐
	AM	9-33541	2/7/97	Japan			☐	☐
	AN	8-94637	4/12/96	Japan			☐	☐
	AO	11-271314	10/8/99	Japan			☐	☐
	AP	11-326341	11/26/99	Japan			☐	☐

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	AL	3002287	7/13/94	Japan			☐	☐
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